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A Communication

"us now praise famous
men"—
Men of little showing—
For their work continueth,
And their work continueth,
Broad and deep continueth,
Greater than their knowing."

I quote, of course, from Ecclesiastes, with an assist from Rudyard Kipling. I refer, of course, to that selfless band, the CIA. In the nick of time, if I may be permitted a worn phrase, they have come to our rescue. At the last moment they have made for us a sovereign remedy against the fearful creeping malady of peace. I, for one, have never doubted they would meet the emergency.

There are some, to be sure, who do not share my commitment. Unkind things have been spoken of the CIA. A group of pinchbeck intellectuals, it has been implied, is what they are. And worse. In the academics; parvenu academics; do-it-yourself revolutionaries; arriviste subverters; half-baked philosophers; global troublemakers; incompetent military planners; informal busybodies; hirers of the largest collection ever assembled of foreign dingalings, psychotic patriots, and second murderers. I protest.

But I said of an 18th Century seaman that it was his misfortune to be perpetually mistaken. Let the CIA record speak. The U-2 affair, the overthrow of the governments of Guatemala and Iran, the Bay of Pigs, the Viet-Nam solution, the break with Cambodia. From strength to strength, a highway of triumphs.

And now the crown, a timely, impeccable analysis of the economic miseries of the Soviet Union. There have been serious crop failures; in particular, a disastrous drop in grain production. As a result, the CIA estimates, the growth of the Soviet gross national

product in the last two years was less than 2.5 per cent. The economic machine is slowing down, grinding to a stop. If we are patient it may yet go backwards. What folly then for Western countries to extend to the Soviet Union large export credits! I learn from the New York Times that the Johnson Administration will use this argument as a linchpin of its wheel of foreign policy. It may not be obvious how this jibes with the President's fervently expressed desire in his State-of-the-Union Message to dissolve the hatreds of the world, to be "bold in our search for new agreements which can enlarge the hopes of all while violating the interests of none." But high policy is always mysterious and there are stranger ways of gaining a people's confidence than by kicking them in the belly when it is empty. The important thing is to make clear to them it is for their own good.

Amor vincit omnia.

It has come to my notice that the CIA statistics are not everywhere fully accepted. Among university experts on the Soviet economy, it is reported, the CIA's conclusions have been "generally challenged." Such epithets as "absurd," "impossible," "fantastic," have been used. The academic critics have been unable to contain their astonishment, the Times relates, at the CIA's reversal of their own position, for as recently as last year they suggested a 6 to 7 per cent annual growth of the Soviet economy. Fiddlesticks. Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: why then should we desire to be deceived? The CIA men stick to the facts; their appraisals are supple and responsive. They may change tomorrow—and a good thing too.

Moreover, what difference can a few per cent make? The noted Princeton economist, Oskar Morgenstern (who with the late John von Neumann wrote the classic work on game theory) points out in his well-known book, "On the Accuracy of Economic Observations," that large-scale statistics are almost always "unreliable and misleading." History is filled with examples. It has been found, for instance, by the historian Hans Delbrueck that "if the Greek claims regarding the strength of the Persians at Thermopylae were true, there would not even have been room for the Persians to occupy the battlefield," and, given the roads of the time, the last Persian troops would have just crossed the Bosphorus when the first had already arrived in Greece. Well, it may be said, these were Greek statistics. But our Census Bureau, which in the 1953 Census recorded a surprising number of widowed 14-year-old boys, does not do much better; and our Agriculture Department in estimating our own, not Soviet, crops, has been known to wander between 450 million and 380 million bushels, a margin even Mr. Estes might find exciting.

My faith remains. The CIA is doing a splendid job. Besides, they mean well. One of the characters in Aldous Huxley's "Point Counter Point" observes: "If you look up 'Intelligence' in the new volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, you'll find it classified under the following three heads: Intelligence, Human; Intelligence, Animal; Intelligence, Military. My stepfather's a perfect specimen of Intelligence, Military." So is the CIA. I am proud of them.

A final point. In the period of self-examination and self-reproach which followed after the assassination of President Kennedy, it was widely said that all of us, and not only

the assassin, were in some measure responsible for the tragedy. The hatreds we felt, the hatreds we tolerated had created the climate conducive to this evil deed. But the period of contrition was brief and certainly not sufficiently prolonged for penance. Within a week or so we were reassured. Sundry journalists and pundits imparted to us the joyous tidings that our image abroad is unimpaired, that the essential "goodness" of America (as one distinguished columnist described it) is universally recognized, and that our belovedness rating is now at a historic high. I am not surprised. We are loved because we deserve to be loved. No bureau or department of our Government has more strengthened that image, more deepened that affection, more promoted the good will of the community of man than the CIA. Augurs, diviners, college of reason, protectors of peace and understanding, hail!

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